

THE VICTORIA DECLARATION

ON THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Whereas: The overarching mission of **International National Trusts Organisation** (“INTO”) is to promote the conservation and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage of all nations for the benefit of the people of the world.

Whereas: In furtherance of this mission, INTO has objectives, amongst others, to pursue advocacy in the interests of conservation of cultural and natural heritage and to formulate and promote conservation best practices.

Whereas: At the 13th International National Trusts Conference in Dublin, Ireland, in September 2009, INTO, its associates and affiliates adopted the **Dublin Declaration on Climate Change** and thereby on behalf of the citizens of the global heritage movement, urged world leaders to take strong and decisive action to address climate change and its impacts on heritage through both mitigation strategies that reduce climate change and adaptation strategies to cope with its unavoidable consequences.

Whereas: The recommendations in the Dublin Declaration on Climate Change remain vitally relevant to achieving the necessary reforms to address climate change.

Whereas: INTO has maintained a proactive stance to encourage world leaders to take the action specified in the Dublin Declaration, including participating in the UNFCCC Climate Change Conferences COP15 at Copenhagen in 2009 and COP16 at Cancun in 2010.

Whereas: INTO observes that globally progress has been too slow in achieving the necessary reforms to take the action and adopt the strategies specified in the Dublin Declaration on Climate Change.

NOW BY THIS **THE VICTORIA DECLARATION** members of INTO and other delegates representing cultural and natural heritage organisations gathered in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, and all those who subsequently endorse this Declaration

Urge the global community, including in particular its leaders, to accept the following propositions and thereafter modify their actions and strategies:

1. The failure to communicate the threat of climate change in terms which describe the dire implications for cultural identity, diversity and sustainability and consequential social degradation fundamentally weakens the prospects for global reform to combat climate change.
2. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“UNFCCC”) and associated UN protocols insufficiently acknowledge the capacity of climate change to substantially, if not totally, undermine the integrity of the world’s cultures, altering most and destroying many.
3. If the integrity of the world’s cultures is undermined by climate change then social dislocation and social instability will follow. Such implications are likely to be experienced at all levels of society: locally, nationally and globally.
4. The destruction of culture is a fundamental breach of the principle of intergenerational equity, in that a culture destroyed or diminished within the time of the current generation will deprive members of future generations of their right to their cultural inheritance.
5. The opportunity to understand, celebrate and cherish one’s culture is an inherent component of social stability of all nations, of all peoples – the protection of cultural integrity is therefore a fundamental human right – as has been confirmed in UNESCO Conventions.
6. History has shown that the obliteration of a culture leads to social annihilation, for instance where the connectivity between a people and their place and their history has been destroyed. The intangible importance of cultural relationships, such as “a sense of place” of a people, is critical to their social identity, diversity and sustainability.
7. The cultural connectivity between a living people and their historical roots engenders pride of place and a spirit to defend it at all costs. Climate change is the current generation’s most fearsome threat most likely to undermine all people’s cultures thus destroying the integrity and continuity of those cultures.
8. For the sake of future generations, we must collectively tackle climate change not just because of changes in the physical environment, not just for reasons of sustaining human health and welfare, but to recognise that the core strength and connectivity of all the socio-economic systems of humankind, is maintaining cultural identity, diversity and sustainability.
9. If the global community acts too slowly in response to climate change, or acts insufficiently, the cultural legacy for those that follow the current generation will be irreparably diminished.
10. Cultural heritage holds not only the record of past failures to adapt to climate change but also the record of successful ways of minimising greenhouse gas emissions and thereby shows how climate change may be mitigated.

11. One remedy and necessary reform of the UN processes is to more effectively incorporate in to the “language” of climate change, in particular the UNFCCC, a recognition that the integrity of the cultures of all the peoples and nations are threatened by climate change.
12. In the course of climate change debates world leaders frequently speak of consultation and seeking community consensus, yet invariably climate change is simply expressed in terms of impacts on the physical environment (even though efforts are made to draw links to human health and welfare). As a consequence of this limited perspective, communities are disconnected from understanding the full implications of climate change.
13. If the threat of climate change is largely described in terms of impacts on the physical environment, then the prospect of achieving global consensus for climate change action will always be undermined. However, if the threats of climate change are also couched in terms of culture – of societal values – then there is likely to be greater responsiveness across the global community. Put in terms of cultural identity, diversity and sustainability, the path to wider community understanding and so support for climate change action (be it mitigation or adaptation) should be more achievable. There will be engendered a greater willingness to embrace essential reforms.

The Victoria Declaration on the Implications for Cultural Sustainability of Climate Change was adopted by members of the International National Trusts Organisation (‘INTO’) and other delegates representing cultural and natural heritage organisations gathered in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada on 12-15 October 2011 for the 14th International Conference of National Trusts: the theme of which was “Connecting People, Places and Stories – New Strategies for Conservation in a Changing World”.

The International National Trusts Organisation (‘INTO’) occupies a unique role within the global heritage movement, bringing together natural and cultural heritage organisations from around the world, representing a constituency of well in excess of six million individual members across some 45 countries and growing. Through alliances and affiliations with other organisations sharing a common concern for the global environment, the INTO “voice” speaks for tens of millions of people globally.

INTO member organisations and INTO’s associates, affiliates and partners have pledged to work with governments and agencies worldwide to tackle climate change and thereby to protect the world’s natural and cultural heritage now and for future generations. Conscious of their role as custodians and repositories of heritage, which is the manifestation of evolved and evolving culture, INTO member organisations have also pledged to take action to address their own carbon emissions and thereby to be exemplars of best practice in this regard.

